ERASURE POETICS: The Creative Process.

LHC Senior Thesis Presentation

Samantha Marie Schaefer
I found myself when I was young, died before I was fifteen.
Erasure: Definitions and Brief Context

Erasure: My Creative Growth Process

Four Stages, Four Projects, Four Years

1. Investigation: ‘Witness for the Prosecution.’
2. Breaking Form: ‘The Anatomy Lesson.’
3. Intoxication of Ideas: ‘The Everything Head’
4. Embracing Structure: ‘Bones’

Conclusion
Defining Erasure

Webster Online Dictionary states: “Erasure poetry is created by erasing words from an existing text in prose or verse and arranging the new text into lines and/or stanzas.”

“An erasure is the creation of a new text by disappearing the old text that surrounds it. I don’t consider the pages to be poems, but I do think of them as poetry, especially in sequence and taken as a whole; when I finish an erasure book I feel I have written a book of poetry without a single poem in it, and that appeals to me.” –Mary Ruefle
Erasure: A Brief Context

“The poetry of erasure is taking place all around us. Underneath the pavement, behind newspaper headlines, on paste-layered billboards and graffiti-laden walls, our communal landscape is continuously peeling away and papering over itself. **ITS VERY SURFACE IS A LIVING THING IN FLUX BETWEEN THE DUELING PROCESSES OF DECAY AND RENEWAL, DRIVEN IN THE NAME OF PROGRESS TO ADAPT TO THE SHIFTING CONTEXTUAL DEMANDS OF CULTURE OR BE REPLACED, REMOVED, RE-IMAGINED.** While this process can, at times, be artificially postponed, nothing escapes its effects forever. This world demands of its denizens a constant and vigilant revision of form.”

-Travis MacDonald, “A Brief History of Erasure Poetics”
Echoes of Sapphic fragments and Schwermer’s *The Tablets*

~Erasure vs. Erosion

- “A new form of reductive poetics has emerged, concerning itself with the deliberate removal (or covering over) of words on the page rather than their traditionally direct application thereto.” -MacDonald

- “The practitioners of this relatively new form are scattered widely across disparate schools, lineages, methods and styles might not consider themselves members of any sort of literary movement, let alone this one in particular. They are, nevertheless, connected by a common intent: to fully enact and embody the naturally evolving processes of erasure in their work and to thereby assist in the reclamation of our language and culture one text at a time.” -MacDonald
Stage One: Investigation

- ‘Witness for the Prosecution’

The piece has a clearly rectangular and familiar spatial configuration. The collection is comprised of two-page vignettes, often of some sort of found art, writing or picture in combination with an erased page of text. Each two-page section is a poem in its own right.
Stage Two: Breaking Form

‘The Anatomy Lesson’: Combination of mystery art-book about Rubens (pages were given to me randomly...) and a found ‘Dodging and Burning’ tool.

Creation of a tool: Dodging and Burning in photographic development: “In basic terms, dodging is a process to lighten dark spots on a print and burning is a process to darken light spots on a print to achieve a consistent exposure throughout the image.” – Ortwein
The Anatomy Lesson

Three new layers added:

1. Boundary Breaking form
2. Centralized Theme
3. Interactive!

Ultimately opened the door to taking new risk with spatial configuration, theme and function.
Stage Three: Intoxication of Ideas

‘The Everything Head’:
- Styrofoam hat manikin
- Text from *Kateri of the Mohawks* by Marie Cecilia Buehrle. Extra addition cut-out from *Favorite Selected Songs, pub. 1952*.

A collision of too many ideas without proper structural means of expression.
The Everything Head

- Adding too many new layers:
- 3D form with no obvious logical structure
- Conceptualized brain vomit
- Wine Bottle: Inebriated tree of knowledge
- Sinner vs. Saint: binaries and the text as the grey matter or thoughts between dichotomy.
- Filled by old school papers, two turkey feathers, two blue-jay feathers, cardinal feathers and rocks from Lake Superior.

UNFINISHED: Necessary step to realizing a need for refinement and accessible structure.
Stage Four:
Embracing New Structure

Bones

- Physically represents the process of erasure in that the structure is obvious and necessary, if somewhat unconventional.

- New flesh: Cutting away excess knowledge, words and narrative to present a streamlined meaningful piece.

- Structure is necessary to creative process. This is evidence of my journey to discovering my own creative fundamentals.
Conclusion

○ THANKS FOR COMING!